



JUST THE FACTS: Traumatic Brain Injury

Overcoming Sexual Problems

- **Recognize triggers.** Keeping a record will help to identify triggers that cause or accompany sexual problems. For example, you may have trouble sexually when you feel tired or after a stressful day – fatigue and stress would be understood as triggers. Deployment memories may cause you to feel anxious or depressed; these moods, in turn, could trigger sexual problems.
- **Stop the worry spin cycle.** Increased worries make sexual problems worse. If you're thinking things like "I can't satisfy my partner" or "I won't be able to perform" before or during sexual experiences, stop the thoughts as quickly as possible. Instead of worrying, substitute thoughts like, "Both my partner and I will enjoy this experience together."
- **Don't just wait it out.** Usually, sexual problems don't improve only with the passing of time. It's best to have open communication with your partner, and seek consultation with a qualified counselor.
- **Talk to your partner.** Sexual problems are often linked to relationship problems. Discuss the problem with your partner. Instead of focusing only on the sexual problem, be sure to talk about what you can be doing better as a couple.
- **Talk to your health care provider.** Your health care provider can determine potential causes and treatments. Make sure that your provider is aware of your concussion. Keep in mind that many doctors don't ask about sexual health problems. To avoid feeling embarrassed or nervous, prepare what you will say ahead of time. Bring a list of current medications to help determine whether any of the medications are contributing to the problem. Your provider may suggest a treatment approach including medications, counseling, or further testing. Women may require an endocrine work-up to assess potential hormonal disorders.
- **Work on related issues.** If your sexual problems are related to relationship difficulty, stress, physical pain, or depression, make sure you're addressing those problems. Individual and couples counseling can help with sexual difficulties and any potential underlying issues.

